IN THE CLAIMS

1. **(currently amended)** A story branching control method for a video game whose content of ~~the~~ a story is branched in accordance with a player's instruction, comprising the steps of:

providing a branching point <u>selectable by a user</u> ~~on a way of~~ <u>for determining</u> a flow of the story;

receiving a search instructing input <u>for searching for the branching point</u>;

searching for the branching point for a predetermined period of time ~~from~~ <u>after</u> <u>receiving</u> the search instructing input;

~~comparing~~<u>determining whether</u> the branching point ~~with the point of~~ <u>exists</u> <u>during the predetermined period of time after receiving</u> the search instructing input; and

determining a branch destination <u>of the story</u> in accordance with <u>a success or</u> <u>failure of determining whether the branching point exists during the predetermined period</u> <u>of time</u> ~~the result of the comparing~~.

2. **(currently amended)** The story branching control method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of:

setting a predetermined variant value for use in ~~a~~ <u>the</u> determination of the branch destination in accordance with the result of the ~~comparing~~ <u>determining whether the</u> <u>branching point exists during the predetermined period</u>.

3. **(currently amended)** The story branching control method according to claim 2, further comprising the steps of:

~~counting the~~ <u>incrementing a</u> number ~~of the comparing~~ <u>after the determining step</u>; and

setting a value of the ~~counting~~ <u>incremented number</u> as the predetermined variant value.

4. (original) The story branching control method according to claim 2, further comprising the step of:

determining the branch destination in accordance with the predetermined variant value.

5. (currently amended) The story branching control method according to claim 4, further comprising the step of:

determining the branch destination in accordance with the variant value set by an initial value of a predetermined variant or ~~by~~ <u>in accordance with</u> the result of the ~~comparing~~ <u>determining whether the branching point exists during the predetermined period</u>, when the branching point to have been reached is detected by the flow of story within a period excluding the predetermined period of time.

6. (currently amended) The story branching control method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of:

setting a predetermined flag in accordance with the result of the ~~comparing~~ <u>determining whether the branching point exists during the predetermined period</u>.

7. (original) The story branching control method according to claim 6, further comprising the step of:

determining the branch destination in accordance with the predetermined flag.

8. (original) The story branching control method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of:

generating a predetermined search notification signal for notifying the search being made, simply within the predetermined period of time from the search instructing input.

9. (original) . The story branching control method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of:

generating, when the branching point to have been passed is detected by the flow of information within a period excluding the predetermined period of time, a predetermined pass notification signal for notifying the branching point to have been passed.

10. (original) The story branching control method according to claim 9, further comprising the step of:

generating the predetermined pass notification signal, simply when the branching point to have been passed is a predetermined one of whole branching points set on the way of the flow of story.

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11. (currently amended) A story branching control method for a video game

whose content of ~~the~~ a story is branched in accordance with a player's instruction,

comprising the steps of:

providing a branching point in a flow of the story; and

determining a branch destination in accordance with a predetermined variant

value, when having reached the branching point by the flow of the story.

12. (currently amended) A notification signal generating method for a video

game whose content of ~~the~~ a story is branched in accordance with a player's instruction,

comprising the steps of:

providing a branching point in a flow of the story; and

generating, when having passed the branching point by the flow of the story, a

predetermined pass notification signal notifying the branching point to have been passed.

13. (currently amended) The notification signal generating method according to

claim 12, further comprising the step of:

generating the predetermined pass notification signal, simply when the branching

point to have been passed is a predetermined one of whole branching points set on a way

of the flow of the story.

14. (currently amended) A program executing apparatus for executing

processing program whose content of ~~the~~ a story is branched in accordance with a

player's instruction, comprising:

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search instructing input detecting means for detecting an input of ~~an~~ a search instructing input by ~~a user~~ the player;

searching means for searching for a branching point provided on a way of a flow of the story, for a predetermined period of time from detecting the search instructing input;

~~comparing~~ branch point determining means for ~~comparing~~ determining whether the branching point ~~with the point of~~ exists during the predetermined period of time after detecting the search instructing input; and

branch destination determining means for determining a branch destination of the story in accordance with a success or failure of the branch point determining means in determining whether the branching point exists during the predetermined period of time ~~the result of the comparing~~ .

15. (currently amended) A recording medium having recorded therein a processing program whose content of ~~the~~ a story is branched in accordance with a player's instruction, the ~~video~~ processing program comprising and making a computer execute the steps of:

detecting an input of ~~an~~ a search instructing input by ~~a user~~ the player;

searching for a branching point provided on a way of a flow of the story, for a predetermined period of time from detecting the search instructing input;

~~comparing~~ determining whether the branching point exists during the predetermined period of time after detecting ~~with the point of~~ the search instructing input; and

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determining a branch destination of the story in accordance with a success or failure of determining whether the branching point exists during the predetermined period of time the result of the comparing.

16. (currently amended) A computer with a memory storing a processing program whose content of ~~the~~ a story is branched in accordance with a player's instruction, the processing program comprising and making ~~a~~ the computer execute the steps of:

detecting an input of a search instructing input by ~~a user~~ the player;

searching for a branching point provided on a way of a flow of story, for a predetermined period of time from detecting the search instructing input;

~~comparing~~ determining whether the branching point exists during the predetermined period of time after detecting ~~with the point of~~ the search instructing input; and

determining a branch destination of the story in accordance a success or failure of determining whether the branching point exists during the predetermined period of time ~~with the result of the comparing~~.